

**U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
White River Field Office  
220 E Market St  
Meeker, CO 81641**

## **CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION**

NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-110-2011-0027-CX

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER: Amend COC74539

PROJECT NAME: Extend Buried Fiber Optic Cable (PCU Plant to Exxon Office)

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Sixth Principal Meridian  
T.2S., R.96W.,  
sec. 8, lots 6, 7, 8,  
sec. 9, SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ .

APPLICANT: Exxon Mobil Corporation (Exxon)

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTION: Exxon has submitted an application to the White River Field Office for authorization to construct a segment of buried fiber optic cable. This would link the existing Piceance Creek Unit Gas Plant to the existing Exxon office building and microwave communication tower located at the head of Collins Gulch (Rio Blanco County Road 3).

The  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch cable would be housed inside a 2-inch diameter polyethylene conduit and buried to a 4-foot depth. The disturbance would be 4,655 feet and potentially 50 feet wide for surface disturbance of up to 5.34 acres. Equipment would include a backhoe, a trencher such as Ditch Witch RT80, and a boring machine such as a Ditch Witch JT922.

The route follows Rio Blanco County Road 76 and the Questar buried communication line. A Plan of Development and plat were included in the application and are available in the case file.

The project would be part of the electronic communications system for multiple units/leases and would be authorized as an amendment to existing right-of-way grant COC74539. Total new encumbrance would be 2.67 acres, more or less.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The Proposed Action is subject to and has been reviewed for conformance with (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3) the following plan:

Name of Plan: White River Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP).

Date Approved: July 1, 1997

Decision Number/Page: Page 2-49

Decision Language: “To make public lands available for the siting of public and private facilities through the issuance of applicable land use authorizations, in a manner that provides for reasonable protection of other resource values.”

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW: The Proposed Action qualifies as a categorical exclusion under 516 DM 11.9, Number (E-12): “*Grants of right-of-way wholly within the boundaries of other compatible developed rights-of-way.*”

The Proposed Action has been reviewed with the list of extraordinary circumstances described in the table below. This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. None of the following exceptions in 43 CFR 46.215 apply.

Exception	YES	NO
1. Have significant adverse effects on public health and safety.		X
2. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation, or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands, floodplains; national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.		X
3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.		X
4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.		X
5. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.		X
6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.		X
7. Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau of office.		X
8. Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have adverse effects on designated Critical Habitat for these species.		X
9. Violate a Federal law, or a State, local or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.		X

Exception	YES	NO
10. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations		X
11. Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites.		X
12. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species.		X

#### INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

The Proposed Action was presented to, and reviewed by the White River Field Office interdisciplinary team on 12/6/2010. A list of resource specialists who participated in this review is available upon request from the White River Field Office.

#### REMARKS:

*Cultural Resources:* The proposed right-of-way (ROW) has been inventoried at the Class III (100% pedestrian) level (Lincoln 2011 compliance dated 6/30/2011) with no new cultural resources identified in the inventoried area nor were any previously known sites relocated. It is unlikely that any cultural resources will be impacted unless there are undetectable subsurface remains present. (MRS 7/13/2011)

*Native American Religious Concerns:* No Native American Religious Concerns are known in the area, and none have been noted by Northern Ute tribal authorities. Should recommended inventories or future consultations with Tribal authorities reveal the existence of such sensitive properties, appropriate mitigation and/or protection measures may be undertaken. (MRS 7/13/2011)

*Paleontological Resources:* The proposed fiber optic ROW lies in an area generally mapped as the Uinta Formation (Tweto 1979) which the BLM WRFO has classified as a PFYC 4/5 formation meaning it is known to produce scientifically noteworthy fossil resources (c.f. Armstrong and Wolny 1989). If it becomes necessary to excavate into the underlying sedimentary rock formation there is a potential to impact scientifically noteworthy fossil. (MRS 7/13/2011)

*Threatened and Endangered Wildlife Species:* There are no wildlife-related issues or concerns associated with the Proposed Action. (LB 01/5/2011)

*Threatened and Endangered Plant Species:* There are no threatened, endangered or BLM-sensitive plant species known to derive potential, suitable, or occupied habitat within the project

area. Implementation of the Proposed Action would have no conceivable effect on threatened, endangered, or sensitive plant species. (MT 12/7/2010)

#### REFERENCES CITED:

Armstrong, Harley J., and David G. Wolny

1989 Paleontological Resources of Northwest Colorado: A Regional Analysis. Museum of Western Colorado, Grand Junction, Colorado.

Lincoln, Gail

2011 ExxonMobil Corporation: Class III Cultural Resource Inventory of the Proposed PCU Fiber Optic Line in Rio Blanco County, Colorado. Metcalf Archaeological Consultants, Grand Junction, Colorado. (11-54-06; SHPO # RB.LM.NR2260)

Tweto, Ogden

1979 Geologic Map of Colorado. United States Geologic Survey, Department of the Interior, Reston, Virginia.

#### MITIGATION:

1. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing historic or archaeological sites, or for collecting artifacts. If historic or archaeological materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO). Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear eligible for the National Register of Historic Places
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not necessary)
- a timeframe for the AO to complete an expedited review under 36 CFR 800-11 to confirm, through the State Historic Preservation Officer, that the findings of the AO are correct and that mitigation is appropriate.

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

2. Pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(g) the holder of this authorization must notify the AO, by telephone, with written confirmation, immediately upon the discovery of human remains, funerary items, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony. Further, pursuant to 43 CFR 10.4(c) and (d), you must stop activities in the vicinity of the discovery and protect it for 30 days or until notified to

proceed by the authorized officer.

3. The operator is responsible for informing all persons who are associated with the project operations that they will be subject to prosecution for knowingly disturbing paleontological sites, or for collecting fossils. If fossil materials are uncovered during any project or construction activities, the operator is to immediately stop activities in the immediate area of the find that might further disturb such materials, and immediately contact the authorized officer (AO).

Within five working days the AO will inform the operator as to:

- whether the materials appear to be of noteworthy scientific interest
- the mitigation measures the operator will likely have to undertake before the site can be used (assuming in situ preservation is not feasible)

If the operator wishes, at any time, to relocate activities to avoid the expense of mitigation and/or the delays associated with this process, the AO will assume responsibility for whatever recordation and stabilization of the exposed materials may be required. Otherwise, the operator will be responsible for mitigation cost. The AO will provide technical and procedural guidelines for the conduct of mitigation. Upon verification from the AO that the required mitigation has been completed, the operator will then be allowed to resume construction.

4 If it becomes necessary to excavate into the underlying sedimentary rock formation to excavate the trench for the fiber optic cable an approved paleontological monitor shall be present prior to and during all such trenching operations.

COMPLIANCE PLAN (optional): On-going compliance inspections and monitoring of rights-of-way will be conducted by White River Field Office staff. Specific mitigation developed in the associated Categorical Exclusion will be followed. The Operator will be notified of compliance related issues in writing, and depending on the nature of the issue(s), will be provided 30 days to resolve such issues.

NAME OF PREPARER: Jeanne E. Newman

NAME OF ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR: Heather Sauls

DECISION AND RATIONALE: I have reviewed this CX and have decided to approve the Proposed Action.

This action is listed in the Department Manual as an action that may be categorically excluded. I have evaluated the action relative to the 12 criteria listed above and have determined that it does not represent an exception and is, therefore, categorically excluded from further environmental analysis.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL:

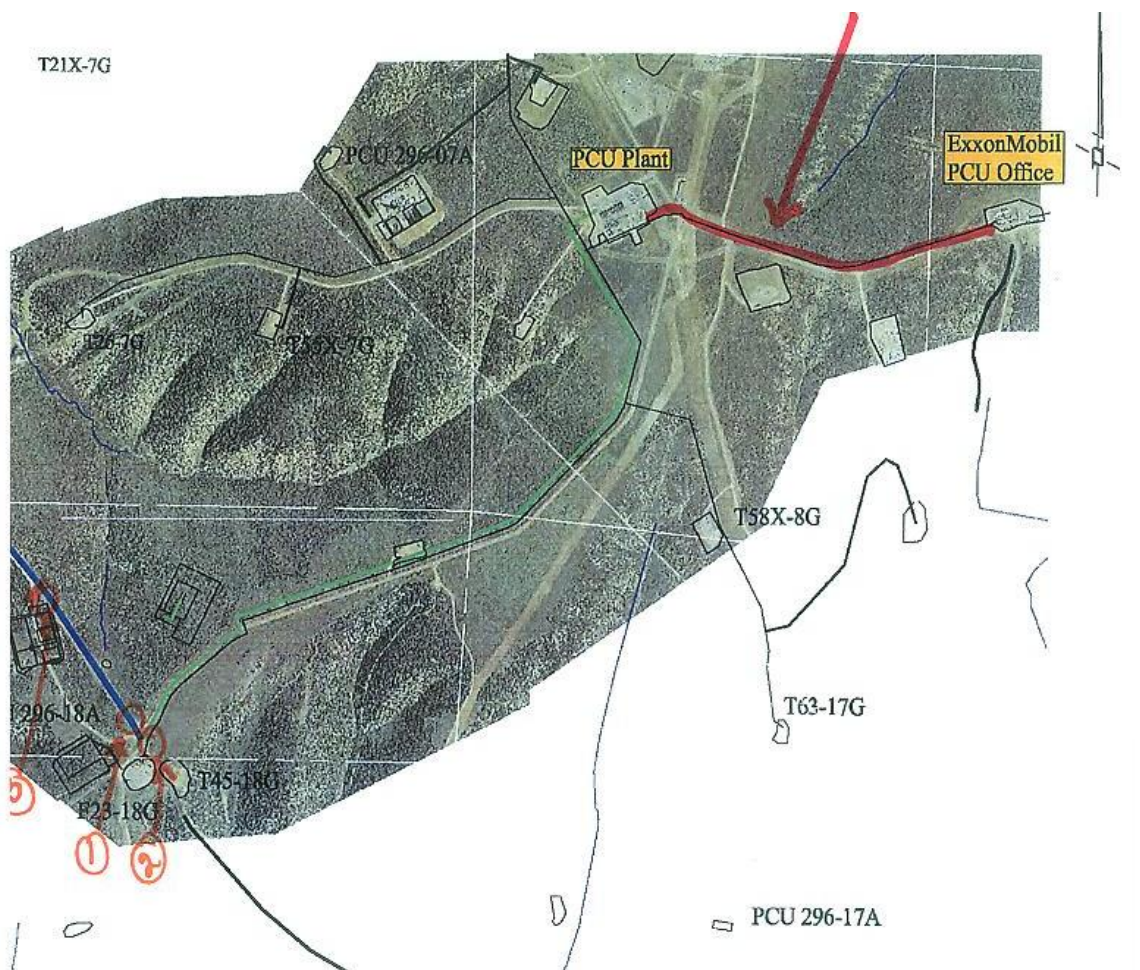
*Est M. McCall*  
Acting Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 7/18/11

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Map of Fiber Optic Line from Exxon Office to PCU Plant

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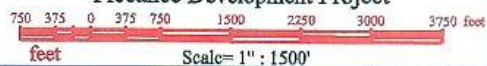


## ATTACHMENT 1

### NOTES:

1. Aerial photos of May 2007.
2. Coordinates are NAD27, US State plane, CO north zone 0501.

Proposed Combined Liquids and Fiber-Optics ROW  
PCU Plant / PCU 23-18 / PCU 35-11 Area  
Piceance Development Project



REV.	DATE	REVISION DESCRIPTION	ENG.	DRAWN	CHECKED	APPROVED
P	17 Feb 10	Preliminary	—	CEL	CEL	WJD

EXXONMOBIL

Drawn by: CEL

Checked by: CEL

Date: Feb. 17, 2010

Scale: 1" : 1500'

Dwg No. PC-10-004